



[Karl Marx](#)

Value, Price and Profit

By 1865 **Karl Marx** (pictured) had long since solved the theoretical problems of his work on Surplus Value, “Capital”. In that year he gave the well-known address to a gathering of leadership, including worker-leaders of the First International, which was in danger of falling apart very soon after it was founded. That address afterwards became a popular publication under the name “[Value, Price and Profit](#)” (attached).

The first volume of “Capital” was published two years later.

This short book has served the labour movement well. Among other things, it debunks the argument, still attempted by employers and their apologists in South Africa today, that wage rises will cause unemployment (or that wage drops will cause employment, for that matter). In 2013, there was a concerted effort to bring back this argument via the bourgeois media,

involving such disreputable right-wing propagandists as Leon Louw, Paul Hoffman, Ann Bernstein and Loane Sharp, together with some formerly more respectable ones like Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass.

The book shows how commodities, including commodity Labour-Power, are normally sold at their full value, and yet how, at the same time, the worker is getting swindled every day. It explains this apparent paradox, whereby the employer pays in full, yet gets more than what he paid for; and this is the secret of the self-increase of capital.

The book encourages workers to struggle for better wages and conditions, but it also (prefiguring Lenin's argument against "Economism" four decades later in "[What is to be Done?](#)") shows clearly why trade unionism, without separate political organisation, will never succeed in throwing off the yoke of capital.

The abridged version of "Value, Price and Profit", attached, can serve as the short, or "basic", version of "Capital" that so many people long to have. It will help us to get a better grip on some of the key concepts in "Capital, Volume 1" such as Labour, Value, Labour-Power, and above all, Surplus Labour, Surplus-Value, and Profit.

To reduce the work to a manageable size for our dialogue purposes we have put aside several sections of "Value, Price and Profit". But the work is available on the Internet for anyone who would like to read it in full. The best source for Marxist classics

in general on the Internet is the [Marxists Internet Archive](#) (MIA).

Here are the last words of “Value, Price and Profit”:

“...the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the *conservative* motto, “*A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!*” they ought to inscribe on their banner the *revolutionary* watchword, “*Abolition of the wages system!*”

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Value, Price and Profit, Parts 6 to 10, Marx](#) and [last page](#).
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